

**2009 CDBG Planning Grant
Proposal Cover Sheet**



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**
Partners for Better Communities

APPLICANT: County of Nelson, Virginia

CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIAL: Allen M. Hale, Chairman, Board of Supervisors

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ADDRESS/CONTACT PERSON:

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PROJECT NAME: Blue Ridge Medical Center Expansion Planning Project

PROJECT COST:

<u>Source</u>	<u>Amount</u>
BRMC Capital Campaign	\$ 44,500
BRMC Capital Improvement Grant	\$ 37,000
DHCD CDBG Planning Grant	\$ 25,000
<i>Total</i>	\$ 106,500

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The County of Nelson proposes a Planning Project to continue development of a preliminary architect plan, including site plan, floor plan, three dimensional drawing, and construction cost estimate for a facility to address unmet dental health and primary care needs for local residents at or below 80% of Area Median Income. This Planning Project will also continue the evaluation of the needs of the community for the planned services as well as the resources available in the locality to support the ongoing operations of the expanded center upon completion of construction and installation of all equipment and furnishings.

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

The Blue Ridge Medical Center Expansion addresses the CDBG National Objective as an "activity which will benefit low-and-moderate-income families."

PREPARER: Margaret J. Whitehead

CERTIFICATION AND SIGNATURE:

To the best of my knowledge and belief, information in the proposal is true and correct.

Name: Stephen A. Carter Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

Blue Ridge Medical Center Expansion Project Description

Introduction

Blue Ridge Medical Center (BRMC) is located in rural Nelson County midway between the cities of Charlottesville, 45 minutes to the north, and Lynchburg, 40 minutes to the south. The BRMC service area includes Nelson County, southern Albemarle County, and northern Amherst County. Both Amherst and Nelson Counties are designated as "medically underserved areas" (MUAs). As a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC), BRMC provides high quality health care to everyone, with or without health insurance and regardless of ability to pay. The Center offers a sliding fee scale for qualified patients, and accepts all insurances, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Overview of the Community

Nelson County has three primary care medical practices, including two in the northwest sector owned by Charlottesville hospital systems, and Blue Ridge Medical Center in the southern sector. Amherst County has four private practices, none of which offers fees based on ability to pay or accepts new Medicaid patients. The Nelson County Health Department provides a number of care coordination services for mothers and children through age 2, Children's Specialty Services (CSS) for physically handicapped children, prenatal care, family planning, and WIC services in addition to public sanitation and environmental health. In Amherst the Health Department is able to provide all the same services plus well-child, immunizations, and general medical services by appointment. The Nelson County Health Department does offer school based dental services for children in the public schools who are eligible for free lunch. In neighboring Amherst County, limited dental services are being offered through a community health center in Lynchburg. The Free Clinic of Central Virginia operates a clinic two mornings a week in Nelson County, utilizing a trailer owned by BRMC. The demand is much greater than these local resources can meet.

Most of Nelson County has been federally designated as a "Dental Health Professional Shortage Area" or Dental HPSA. There is an acute need for available and affordable dental health care. Factors contributing to this need are the rural nature of the county and its lack of transportation resources, the high percentage of local residents without dental insurance, the cost of dental care and the lack of affordable payment options, and the difficulty in obtaining an appointment time, and the lack of fluoridated water in local communities.

Overview of the Organization

Blue Ridge Medical Center, which first opened its doors in July 1985, is incorporated as a private, non-profit 501(c)(3), tax exempt organization, governed by a 13 member volunteer Board of Directors. The facility expanded three times before 1999 adding an x-ray suite, additional exam rooms, a pharmacy, and office space. In late 2006 we added a small outbuilding to house administrative offices and make space for three additional exam rooms which became available after renovations in the summer of 2007.

The mission of Blue Ridge Medical Center is "to provide quality health care accessible to all people of Nelson County and neighboring communities; and to improve their general health and well-being through prevention, education, and treatment."

In 1992, the Rural Health Outreach Program (RHOP) was initiated with a grant from the U.S. Office of Rural Health Policy of HRSA to provide better access to health care and improve the level of preventive health practices among local residents. This signature BRMC program has evolved over the years, expanding and reducing its personnel base as grant funding and donations have allowed. The Community based clinics (called Health Depots) are provided at local migrant camps, a senior center, and a food bank. In addition, RHOP provides full-time school nurses in Nelson County public schools, assistance with enrollment in children's health insurance programs, a well-organized volunteer program, the Wellness Passport (described in detail below), medical interpretation, and case management. RHOP has launched a "corporate wellness program" designed to offer screenings and preventive health services to area businesses.

An RHOP initiative that has achieved impressive results and statewide recognition is the *Wellness Passport*, a benefits plan for low-income uninsured residents in the service area. Providing a suite of preventive health services, lowered primary care visit fees, and case management for improved access to specialty and hospital based care when needed, the *Wellness Passport* is beginning to demonstrate its worth in terms of reduced cost for emergency department and hospital care.

BRMC houses a pharmacy that fills almost 4,000 prescriptions per month (about 200 per day). Increasing numbers of people qualify for the sliding scale discounts for medication. Through the pharmacy, a medication assistance program has two pharmacy technicians who assist patients with access to indigent care programs offered by over 200 pharmaceutical companies. Using software made available through Virginia Health Care Foundation, these two workers help over 1,000 low-income uninsured individuals with access to over \$1,000,000 worth of free medications.

In addition to quality primary care services, mental health services are provided by a Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner and physical therapy is offered by a contractual therapist on site. Blue Ridge Medical Center has the only X-ray services available in Nelson County.

In 2008, Blue Ridge Medical Center's comprehensive primary and preventive health services were provided for 9255 users in 51,264 encounters by four family practice physicians (3.70 FTE), three clinic-based nurse practitioners (2.05 FTE), and two outreach nurse practitioners (1 FTE). Of those encounters almost 21,500 took place at the main center site and the others were in the schools and community. Currently, about 100 to 130 people are seen by providers and nurses at the center each day.

Planning for the Future

Blue Ridge Medical Center is strategically positioning itself to accommodate local health care needs for the next twenty years. BRMC Board and staff agree about the importance of our vision of the center as "a vital, vibrant health center, recognized as the preferred provider of primary health care for people in our community, accomplishing access to primary care and equalizing disparities in health outcomes for all people of our service area." Quality of care, excellent patient satisfaction, a happy and committed staff are vital components in accomplishment of the vision—along with an efficient, effective, healthy, and attractive environment for patients and employees.

The population in Nelson County is projected to grow from its current 15,227 (2010 estimate) to 16,668 in 2020 and 17,898 in 2030—an overall growth of about 17% over the next 20 years. Demand for BRMC services is increasing now, having jumped from 7,387 users in 2007 to 9,255 users in 2008, and

from a total of 45,281 encounters in 2007 to 51,264 in 2008. Much of the increase came from people who needed more affordable access to care due to the downturn in the economy. In addition, no health care providers in Amherst County (where about 30% of our patients reside) are taking new Medicaid patients. We project that over the next 5 years, our encounter rate will continue to rise both because of the gradual population increase, and also because of the rising percentage of the population that is uninsured or covered by entitlement programs. Medicare users will increase as baby boomers age into eligibility. BRMC encounters at the center increased from 17,795 in 2007 to 21,500 in 2008. We expect that trend to continue, possibly at an even greater rate.

Blue Ridge Medical Center is currently recruiting for a provider of pediatric services, and expects to attract increasing numbers of patients under 19 as local parents become aware of the convenience of care in the community. Currently about 50% of the children in Nelson County Schools obtain primary care from Pediatricians in Lynchburg or Charlottesville. There are no Pediatricians practicing in Nelson County currently.

Designing a facility that will easily accommodate future additions is a critical factor in BRMC's expansion plans.

Basics of the Expansion Plan

The Board and Staff of Blue Ridge Medical Center are planning an expansion of the current facility to:

- ⊕ Increase the number of exam rooms to the point that each health care provider has three from which to work.
- ⊕ Increase the seating capacity and space between the seats in the lobby.
- ⊕ Improve the sound barriers between exam rooms.
- ⊕ **Establish oral health services, integrating them with primary care services.**
- ⊕ Improve patient flow by incorporating more efficient use of space and maximizing interdepartmental communication and movement.
- ⊕ **Provide space for the Rural Health Outreach Program within the confines of the BRMC grounds.**
- ⊕ Build a private interview space for pharmaceutical counseling and increase inventory and work space for the pharmacy.
- ⊕ Maintain excellent integration of BRMC in the life of the community through collaboration with schools, human services, and allied health services for needs assessment, emergency preparedness, and education.
- ⊕ **Provide adequate meeting and training space for the Board and Staff.**
- ⊕ Improve the IT infrastructure to better accommodate communication and the center's electronic health records.
- ⊕ Increase storage for supplies and archived paper charts.
- ⊕ Upgrade the telephone system.

In order to avoid disruption of service during the expansion process, BRMC proposes a two-phased construction project. The first phase would be the construction of a new facility to house the expanded medical care services, the expanded pharmacy, information technology functions, and medical records archives. This building would be constructed on recently purchased land adjacent to the existing BRMC facility. **Once the first-phase of construction has been completed and the facility is operational, the second phase would begin. This will be a renovation of the existing BRMC facility to house the dental**

clinic, the Rural Health Outreach Program (RHOP), as well as expanded conference room, storage space, and administrative offices. A walkway between the new and existing structures would be included in the first phase and would give the visitor a sense of a connected theme and purpose of the total facility. This space may also house a courtyard type area that would allow the opportunity to work with community organizations such as the Master Gardeners, Wintergreen Nature Foundation, the Nelson County Garden Club, and the Historical Society to put together a history of local medicine and use of native plants for medicinal purposes. This space would be an excellent "naming opportunity."

Environmental/Sustainable Design and Construction

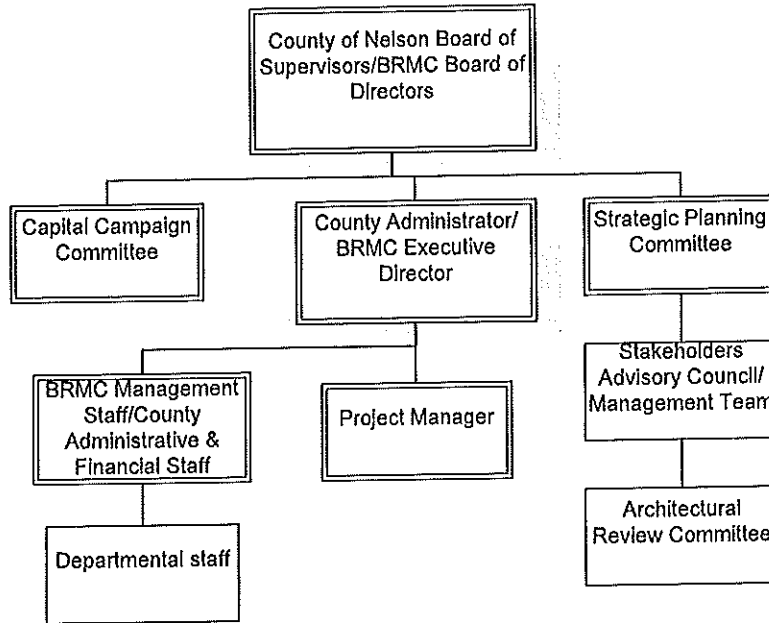
BRMC is fully committed to an environmentally responsible and sustainable project design and prudent environmental protection measures during the construction phase. BRMC is particularly interested in design features that 1) will create a healthy and positive environment for patients, care givers and staff, 2) maximize reductions in operating costs, and 3) allow the use of environmentally responsible building materials. While BRMC may not apply for LEED Green Building certification, we envision the use, where appropriate, of concepts/approaches found in documents such as the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Green Building Rating System and the Green Guide for Health Care.

Funding for the Expansion

To fund the planned expansion Blue Ridge Medical Center is using a carefully planned combination of grants, donations, federal stimulus funding, and state funding, with loans as affordable and necessary.

Community/Board/Staff Input and Oversight

The Board of Directors of Blue Ridge Medical Center has authorized the engagement of a project manager to help with the details of expansion conception, development, and implementation. It is very important to the Center to solicit input from staff, patients, people living near the center, and local residents with relevant expertise. We are collaborating with the County of Nelson in the process of planning for a Community Development Block Grant proposal and using a "Stakeholder's Advisory Committee/Management Team" to provide input from community members, patients, and experts. A subcommittee called the Architectural Review Committee worked closely with the Board and Staff to determine the process by which the Architectural firm was chosen, review all relevant data and proposals, and make a recommendation to the Stakeholders, BRMC's Strategic Planning Committee, and ultimately the BRMC Board of Directors. Please see the organizational chart below, which shows the flow of information and authority for the project.



Outcome

The end product of the building expansion will reflect the vision of Blue Ridge Medical Center as the “preferred provider of health services in Nelson County and surrounding communities” and as a center where quality of care is reflected in the quality of the surroundings in which it is provided, so that we accomplish “access to primary care and equalize disparities in health outcomes for all people of our service area”. The new and renovated buildings will both accommodate the needs of the community in the near term and allow for future expansions.

Department of Housing and Community Development Requirements

No less than 51% of Blue Ridge Medical Center’s total number of patients (9255 served in 2008) will be low to middle income beneficiaries (LMI as defined by the Department of Housing and Community Development). We fully expect that up to 80% of the dental beneficiaries will be LMI beneficiaries. The estimated total cost of the project (renovation of the existing space to accommodate dental health services, outreach services, health education and training, and administrative services for BRMC will be \$1 million including equipment. This cost will be determined during the planning process. The costs associated with the planning process are detailed in the attached planning budget. We estimate the total to be \$106,500.

We anticipate that there will be changes and contingencies involved with the construction and renovation phases. The construction budget will have an amount (up to 10% of the estimated construction costs) set aside for these eventualities. We do not anticipate difficulties in the planning process itself other than possible scheduling conflicts and weather events that may create delays.